

The Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth (*Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*)

Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) and Ketumati Buddhist Vihara

“The three constituents of the Morality Group of the Eightfold Path when considered in detail become *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*.” (*The Requisites of Enlightenment: Bodhipakkhiya Dīpani*. Venerable Ledi Sayadaw. Kandy, Sri Lanka: BPS Buddhist Publication Society, 1971, (Wheel Publication 171-4), 10)

“The perfect moral conduct or character can be categorised under the Eight Precepts called *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*.” (*Nine Special Qualities of the Buddha & Other Essays*. Venerable Dr. Balangoda Ānanda Maitreya Mahānāyaka Thera. London: World Buddhist Foundation, 1995, 16)

The *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* builds upon the framework of the Five Precepts (*Pañca Sīla*). It expands the Fourth Precept of the *Pañca Sīla* to specify the four types of wrong speech from which a lay disciple should abstain. The *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* also requires the candidate to abstain from wrong livelihood, including trading in arms, in living beings (slavery, prostitution), meat, alcohol and poison.

Requirements for formally requesting the Ājīvatthamaka Sīla from a Senior Bhikkhu of the Mahā Sangha

- 1) A Senior *Bhikkhu* representing the *Mahā Sangha* must express willingness to act as Preceptor.
- 2) The candidate must have been an *Upāsaka/Upāsikā* for at least three years.
- 3) The candidate is required to wear white, cream or beige clothes at the Ceremony where the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* are taken.
- 4) If more than one person is taking the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* on the same occasion, the candidates will take them in accordance with the *Theravāda* convention regarding seniority. Consequently, the oldest male candidate will take them first, followed in order according to age by the other male candidates. Next, the oldest female candidate will take them

followed in order according to age by the other female candidates.

- 5) The Preceptor will provide a sash for the candidate to wear at Buddhist meetings.
- 6) The Preceptor will arrange for a certificate to be presented to the candidate by a *Bhikkhu* of great seniority at the next festival at Ketumati.
- 7) After the ceremony is completed, the *Upāsaka/Upāsikā* must endeavour to adhere to the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*. On Full Moon and New Moon Days the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* must be recited. It is also advisable for the *Upāsaka/Upāsikā* to keep in contact with *Bhikkhus*, *Ayyas* or authorised lay *Dhamma* Teachers and a *Vihāra* or a Buddhist group.
- 8) If no *Bhikkhu* or *Ayya* is present, the most senior lay person who has taken the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* may give the Five Precepts to lay people at any Buddhist meeting. (Seniority is determined according to the *Theravāda* convention.) He/she must wear white, cream or beige clothes and also the sash which was presented to them by their Preceptor. These symbols help identify them as someone who has been authorised by the *Mahā Sangha* to give the Five Precepts to lay people.

Ceremony for requesting the Ājīvatthamaka Sīla from a Senior Bhikkhu of the Mahā Sangha

The following ceremony provides the format for a candidate, who has met the requirements outlined previously to ask for, and receive the Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth (*Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*) from a senior *Bhikkhu* representing the *Mahā Sangha*.

The ceremony takes the form of a dialogue between the candidate and the Preceptor. The dialogue is conducted in the *Pāli* language. (An English translation is provided here for reference.)

(Spoken by the candidate)

Okāsa, okāsa, okāsa aham bhante tisanenena sahā Ājīvatthamaka-sīlam dhammam yachāmi. Anukampam katvā, sīlam detha me bhante.

*Dutiyampi aham bhante tisanena sahā Ājīvatthamaka-sīlam
dhammam yachāmi. Anukampam katvā, sīlam detha me bhante.*

*Tatīyampi aham bhante tisanena sahā Ājīvatthamaka-sīlam
dhammam yachāmi. Anukampam katvā, sīlam detha me bhante.*

With your permission venerable sir, I ask for the Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth. Out of compassion, please give me the precepts.

A second time with your permission venerable sir, I ask for the Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth. Out of compassion, please give me the precepts.

A third time with your permission venerable sir, I ask for the Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth. Out of compassion, please give me the precepts.

Vandanā (Homage)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa.

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa.

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa.

Vandanā (Homage)

Homage to the Blessed One, the Perfected One, the fully Awakened One.

Homage to the Blessed One, the Perfected One, the fully Awakened One.

Homage to the Blessed One, the Perfected One, the fully Awakened One.

The candidate now repeats after the Bhikkhu, The Three Refuges and The *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* Precepts.

Tisarana (The Three Refuges)

*Buddham saranam gacchāmi
Dhammam saranam gacchāmi
Sangham saranam gacchāmi*

*Dutiyampi Buddham saranam gacchāmi
Dutiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchāmi
Dutiyampi Sangham saranam gacchāmi*

*Tatiyampi Buddham saranam gacchāmi
Tatiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchāmi
Tatiyampi Sangham saranam gacchāmi*

Tisarana (The Three Refuges)

I go to the Buddha for refuge.
I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
I go to the Sangha for refuge.

For the second time I go to the Buddha for refuge.
For the second time I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
For the second time I go to the Sangha for refuge.

For the third time I go to the Buddha for refuge.
For the third time I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
For the third time I go to the Sangha for refuge.

Ājīvatthamaka Sīla

- 1. Pānātipātā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*
- 2. Adinnādānā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*
- 3. Kāmesu micchācārā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*
- 4. Samphappalāpā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*
- 5. Micchājivā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*

The Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth

- 1. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from killing living beings.*
- 2. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from taking what is not given.*
- 3. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from sexual misconduct.*
- 4. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from false speech.*
- 5. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from backbiting.*

6. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from using harsh and abusive speech.

7. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from useless or meaningless conversation.

8. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from wrong means of livelihood.

(Spoken by the *Bhikkhu*) *Tisaranena saha Ājīvatthamaka-sīlam dhammam sādhuḥkam surakkhitam katvā appamādena sampādeṭha.*

(Spoken by the candidate) *Āma bhante.*

(Spoken by the *Bhikkhu*) Observing carefully these Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth together with the Three Refuges, strive earnestly.

(Spoken by the candidate) Yes, Venerable Sir.

Required Reading

Books

Bhāvanā Vandana: Bhāvanā Devotions Compiled by Dr Henepola Gunaratana

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The Dhammapada: The Path of Truth. Translated by Venerable Dr. Balangoda Ānanda Maitreya Mahānāyaka Thera. Berkeley, California (USA): Parallax Press, 1995. (ISBN 0-938077-87-2)

Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness: Walking the Path of the Buddha. Bhante Henepola Gunaratana. Boston (USA): Wisdom Publications, 2001. (ISBN 0-86171-176-9)

Balangoda Ananda Maitreya, Venerable, and Jayasili (Jacquetta Gomes), *Introducing Buddhism* (Taipei, Taiwan, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2007) (Book code EN074) (www.budaedu.org) (This includes the booklet: *Requirements and Ceremonies for the Five Precepts (Panca Sila), The Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth (Ajivatthamaka Sila), Dhamma Teachers Certificate*, issued by the Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) and Ketumati Buddhist Vihara at Wesak 2006) (Available on line at The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation website www.budaedu.org, Google Books website <http://books.google.com>)

Mahā Paritta: The Discourses of the Great Protection (With the Threefold Refuges, Precepts, Salutations to the Triple Gem, Dependent Origination and Mettā Bhāvanā). Birmingham, Dhamma – Talaka Publications, 1996.

Mindfulness in Plain English. Bhante Henepola Gunaratana. Updated and expanded edition. Boston (USA): Wisdom Publications, 2002. (ISBN 0-86171-321-4)

The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering. Bhikkhu Bodhi. Second edition. Kandy (Sri Lanka): BPS Buddhist Publication Society, 1994. (ISBN 955-24-0116-X)

Old Wisdom in the New World: Americanization in Two Immigrant Theravāda Buddhist Temples. Paul David Numrich. Knoxville, Tennessee (USA): The University of Tennessee Press, 1996. (ISBN 0-87049-905-X)

Safe Harbor: Guidelines, Process and Resources for Ethics and Right Conduct in Buddhist Communities. Edited by Alan Senauke with Teresa Lesko. Berkeley, California (USA): BPF Buddhist Peace Fellowship, 199?. (Available from BPF Buddhist Peace Fellowship, PO Box 4650, Berkeley, California CA 94704, USA,

www.bpf.org)

Wheel 8: *Kālāma Sutta: The Buddha's Charter of Free Inquiry*.
Translated by Soma Thera.

Wheel 14: *Everyman's Ethics: Four Discourses of the Buddha*.

Adapted from the Translations of Nārada Mahā Thera.

Wheel 54: *Mirror of the Dhamma: A Manual of Buddhist Chanting and Devotional Texts*. Nārada Mahā Thera and Bhikkhu Kassapa, revised by Bhikkhu Khantipalo.

Wheel 55: *The Five Precepts: Collected Essays*.

Wheel 206/207: *Lay Buddhist Practice*. Bhikkhu Khantipalo.

Wheel 282/283/284: *Going for Refuge, Taking the Precepts*.
Bhikkhu Bodhi.

Wheel booklets are published by the BPS Buddhist Publication Society and are available online at www.bps.lk

Articles

"The Development and Use of the Eight Precepts for Lay Practitioners, *Upāsakas* and *Upāsikās* in *Theravāda* Buddhism in the West", Jacquetta Gomes, Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravāda), *Contemporary Buddhism*, 5(1) (May, 2004) 47-63.

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Recommended Reading

Books

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Cultural Centre, 1998. (ISBN 955-8129-04-6) (Available from BCC
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Suttas

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